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# Business School Personal Statement

Growing up, my biggest dream was to play football at a major college program. It was a pillar of my identity and the framework for every decision I made. The pursuit of this goal is what got me out of bed for a 6:00am workout, led to me attending 3 different high schools, and took me around the country to showcase my talents and pursue a scholarship offer. As a result, I became the first Massachusetts high school football player to be awarded a football scholarship to UCLA in over 30 years – my dream was becoming a reality. Things took a turn when, in my last game in high school, I tore my ACL running down the sideline on a broken play. Though disheartened, I had a plan. I would rehab, train, and arrive at UCLA ready for training camp. Two years, five surgeries, and countless hours of grueling rehab later, I was brought into a room and informed that my football career was over. I had never even stepped onto the UCLA field. I had come as close as possible to achieving my lifelong goal, only to have it taken from me at the very last second. This marked one of the most difficult periods in my life. It was not until later that I began to understand truly why this event had such a strong effect on me.

When I was younger, I wanted to be a teacher when I grew up. At the time, I could not explain why – I simply knew that I liked it. Looking back, I believe what drew me to that profession was the opportunity to be part of a community in a leadership role. Lifting and enriching those around me has always given me immense pride. I was quite happy at boarding school, where the small community of only 400 students made it easy to know all other students and faculty personally. Living at the school also gave me numerous opportunities to step into leadership roles and make a positive difference in the lives of others around me. I was elected student body president, chosen as captain of the football team, and even had the opportunity to guest lecture a math class weekly, as part of an independent study I created in projective geometry. The sense of accomplishment I felt when contributing to the community is what drove me to seek as many of these opportunities as I could and to dedicate myself to each of those endeavors.

Arriving at UCLA was tough for me at first. My retirement from football not only marked the loss of a lifelong dream, but also the loss of my community and my status within it. As a member of the football team, I had automatically felt that I was in a position to have a positive impact and be a role model for the community. Being suddenly relegated to just another of UCLA's 30,000 undergraduate students felt odd and uncomfortable. My academic experience at UCLA did not offer any respite from this feeling. Most of my classes had 300+ students in them, and the lectures often sounded recycled from prior years. I had to rely heavily on memorization of lessons directly from textbooks. For a period, I was not participating in any team activities, which had until then been a major part of my identity. While losing the ability to play a game I love and to which I had dedicated myself certainly affected me greatly, I believe it was being estranged from a community that caused me to lose much of the motivation that previously drove me to excel. The loss of direction took an even greater toll on my psyche as I began to question my self-worth and found it difficult to keep up meaningful relationships.

My turning point came not from finding another community, but rather from creating one. During my junior year, I was approached with the idea to found a fraternity chapter that was formerly a member of UCLA's Greek society. Taking on this task, I began to feel that old passion inside me. Building something as part of a team and working with the other founding members to create an identity for our fraternity, establishing our own culture, reminded me of my strengths. I am a leader and an innovator. I brought people together to work towards a common goal.

In the elections that followed, I was chosen to be the first president of our renewed chapter. This recognition is still a source of pride for me, especially given the transition I had made from months prior. Further, it instilled in me a strong sense of responsibility. I wanted to honor the faith that my fellow brothers had placed upon me. As membership grew rapidly, new members began to outnumber the old guard. I thoroughly enjoyed acting as a mentor to the younger brothers, speaking with them frequently on navigating the pitfalls and taking advantage of their college experience. Following my term, I worked closely with subsequent presidents to advise them on the challenges which accompanied balancing the priorities of UCLA Interfraternity Council, our national organization, and the current membership. The sense of fulfillment I felt taking on those roles has led to my continued involvement with the fraternity to this day. I return a couple times a year to give professional development presentations, make myself available as a resource, and have even hired a current brother as a part-time intern for the boutique consulting firm I founded.

In reflecting on both times where I have struggled and times where I have excelled, it has become clear to me that I excel in settings where I am deeply involved in the community and can assume a level of leadership. With this knowledge, I have begun to maximize my career potential. By becoming invested in the culture and success of the groups where I have worked, I have established a community in my professional life. Additionally, I have striven constantly to position myself as a leader. As a junior team member, this often means either leading by example or acting as a resource for younger members of the team. Regardless of the specifics, I recognize that the ability to have a positive impact on others and help shape values of my community is what truly drives me.

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